

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency
200 W. Washington Street, Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204**

October, 2009

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2009

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Attorney for the Commission

Bill Brumbach
Fiscal Analyst for the Commission

A copy of this report is available on the Internet. Reports, minutes, and notices are organized by committee. This report and other documents for this Committee can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>.

I. STATUTORY DIRECTIVE

The Indiana General Assembly enacted legislation (IC 2-5-20) directing the Commission on Military and Veterans Affairs (Commission) to study the following:

- (1) Matters relating to veterans and veterans' affairs.
- (2) Matters relating to the active and reserve members of the armed forces of the United States.

The Commission may also study other topics assigned by the Legislative Council or as directed by the Commission's chair.

The Commission is required to report the results of the Commission's study to the General Assembly before November 1 of each year.

The Commission consists of 12 members: four representatives; four senators; and four lay members. The chair of the Legislative Council appoints the chair of the Commission.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM

The Commission was assigned no additional topics of study by the legislative council or the Commission's chairman. The Commission met two times during the 2009 interim session, on October 14, 2009, and October 29, 2009.

III. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

A. Camp Atterbury-Muscatatuck Center for Complex Operations

Brigadier General Cliff Tooley described the various missions and facilities of the Atterbury-Muscatatuck Center for Complex Operations (Center). By 2012, the Center will create over 3,000 jobs and have a fiscal impact on the community of over \$600 million. The Center is unique in the Department of Defense because it operates under a business plan. It is used as an interagency training ground.

General Tooley described the Patriot Academy (Academy). The Academy is a military school for high school drop outs. The Academy is located at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center (MUTC). The Academy will enroll over 2,000 students in the next few years. The Academy anticipates enrollment of about 500 students next year. The students are recruited from all across the country. The program will be regionalized throughout the United States if it is successful at the MUTC.

General Tooley then described the Advanced Urban Operations Training Facility. He described the facility's use by first responders. The facility is also used for village training, special

operations training, and collapsed building training. The MUTC has also been designated as an urban training facility by the Department of Defense.

General Tooley described the various construction plans for the MUTC. He indicated that major construction will begin this year.

B. Operation Diploma

Professor Shelly MacDermid Wadsworth, Purdue University, described the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI). The MFRI is a research and outreach organization based at Purdue University. The MFRI is supported by the Lilly Endowment and the Department of Defense. The mission of the MFRI is to conduct studies that provide insight into the experiences of military members and their families, and to design and implement outreach activities that assist military families.

Professor MacDermid Wadsworth indicated that the new GI Bill creates an economic development incentive in states losing jobs. After October 1, 2009, veterans can transfer some of their academic benefits to dependents and can receive four academic years of educational benefits. The anticipated result is an increased number of students on two and four year college campuses using the GI Bill.

Professor MacDermid Wadsworth indicated there could be 24,500 potential students who could attend Indiana schools as a result of the changes to the GI Bill. The potential revenue from these students could total \$1.078 billion.

Operation Diploma was created to assist student service members and veterans as they transition from combat to the classroom. The goals of Operation Diploma include the following:

- (1) Educating institutions about the needs and concerns of student service members and veterans.
- (2) Engaging institutions in strengthening support and services for these students.
- (3) Enriching the efforts of student veteran organizations (SVOs) across the state.
- (4) Generating new knowledge about the experiences of student veterans and about effective strategies for helping them.

Eric Dietz, Associate Professor at Purdue University, described Purdue University's role in implementing Operation Diploma. He indicated that the Purdue University School of Technology is conducting outreach to various SVOs and veteran's organizations to make veterans aware of the benefits they are entitled to receive under the GI Bill.

C. Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs Update

Tom Applegate, Director, Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs, explained that 91 Indiana counties have Veterans' Service Officers (CVSOs). The CVSOs help account for an annual flow of almost \$604 million in VA compensation and pension money to Indiana veterans.

Mr. Applegate described the Military Family Relief Fund (MRF). The MRF's assets totaled \$3,382,674 on October 6, 2009. The MRF has assisted 165 families. The MRF is funded by proceeds from the Hoosier Veteran and Support Our Troops license plates.

Mr. Applegate then described the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund (VATF). The goal of the VATF is to provide a self-sustaining funding source for the MRF. Although the VATF is not funded by the General Assembly, undesignated money from the MRF may be transferred to the VATF. The Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs is currently working with a budget analyst to develop a trust.

Mr. Applegate discussed the Indiana Veterans' Home (Home). There are currently 265 residents at the Home. The Home will be spending approximately \$3 million of economic stimulus money on various rehabilitation and repair projects. The Home will use \$1,738,000 of the economic stimulus money to demolish unsalvageable buildings.

Mr. Applegate suggested certain legislative proposals pertaining to the Home. He suggested that the General Assembly make changes to the Indiana Code to shorten the length of time an individual must be a resident of Indiana to be admitted to the Home. He also suggested that individuals who entered the service from Indiana but now reside in another state should be allowed admittance to the Home.

In addition, Mr Applegate suggested that oversight of certain historic buildings at the Home be transferred from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs currently oversees these buildings through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Mr. Applegate described various veteran related license plates offered in Indiana. He then stated that the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs would like to see legislation combining the class II disabled veteran license plate with the class I disabled license plate and renaming it the "Disabled Hoosier Veteran" license plate.

D. Service Organization Presentations

Paul Curtis, representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) described the various services his organization provides to Indiana veterans.

Tony Craig, representing the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), stated that the DAV's mission is to build better lives for disabled veterans and their families.

Mr. Hickey of the American Legion indicated that, over the last year, the American Legion has conducted approximately 776 client interviews in Indiana. The American Legion assists veterans with service disability appeals and claims. They also participate in employment fairs and offer direct financial assistance programs to veterans. The American Legion has about 400 posts in

Indiana with volunteer service officers. These service officers direct veterans to various resources. The American Legion also has programs to assist homeless veterans.

LaMonte Crenshaw, representing AMVETS, stressed to Commission members that veterans are members of the community and the community should help veterans in need.

IV. COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission made no findings of fact or recommendations. The Commission voted unanimously to accept the draft copy of the final report.

WITNESS LIST

Brigadier General Cliff Tooley, Indiana National Guard
Shelly MacDermid Wadsworth, Purdue University
Eric Dietz, Purdue University
Tom Applegate, Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs
Paul Curtis, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Tony Craig, Disabled American Veterans
John Hickey, American Legion
LaMonte Crenshaw, AMVETS